

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MARKEY PROBES PRIVACY POLICIES AT HOMELAND SECURITY DEPARTMENT

WASHINGTON, D.C.: Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee and Co-Chairman of the Congressional Privacy Caucus, today sent a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff to request information about the Department's privacy safeguards and use of contractors to collect and maintain personal information.

"The enormous amount of personal information collected and maintained by the Department of Homeland Security represents a massive digital depository of private data that could be an attractive target for identity thieves," Rep. Markey said. "Recent privacy breaches at ChoicePoint, Bank of America, PayMaxx, and SAIC have highlighted the need for robust and layered safeguards at the Department so that the personal information in its massive databases are protected from unauthorized distribution," Rep. Markey added.

Rep. Markey's letter requests information on a range of privacy issues, including:

- Which types of personal information the Department collects or maintains (e.g., Social Security numbers, home addresses, fingerprints, etc.)
- Whether private corporations are utilized as a source of personal information to be collected or maintained by the Department
- How the Department verifies that its contractors have implemented robust privacy policies consistent with U.S. law
- Whether personal information collected or maintained by the Department has been accessed by any unauthorized persons since the Department was created and what actions, such as notification of affected individuals, the Department took in response to any such unauthorized access

"The Department of Homeland Security and its contractors need to have strong safeguards in place to protect the vast storehouses of personal information the Department gathers and manages. The letter I sent to Secretary Chertoff today requests specific information about the Department's privacy practices, and I look forward to hearing from the Secretary about the privacy measures that are currently in place. The information provided by the Department will help determine whether additional steps need to be taken in the future to strengthen the Department's privacy policies," Rep. Markey concluded.

For the full text of the letter and more information on Representative Markey's work on homeland security and privacy check out: www.house.markey.gov

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